

## CLAIMS

### What is claimed is:

1. An instrument for distracting an intervertebral space, the instrument comprising:  
a plying device having two distal ends, and  
two opposing fork-shaped extensions extending from said distal ends of said plying device, each of said forks comprising an interior side, said interior sides facing each other,  
said interior sides comprising a contour adapted to releasably grasp therebetween an artificial intervertebral disc.
2. The instrument according to claim 1 said fork-shaped extensions oriented offset from a longitudinal axis of said plying device.
3. The instrument according to claim 1, said fork-shaped extensions further comprising an elongated section terminating in a substantially U-shaped member comprising a base oriented substantially perpendicular to the elongated section and a pair of laterally spaced tines oriented substantially perpendicular to the base.
4. The instrument according to claim 3 wherein one of said tines is longitudinally aligned with the elongated section.
5. The instrument according to claim 3 the base of the U-shaped member further comprising a vertebral body stop.
6. The instrument according to claim 5 said vertebral body stop comprising a forward ridge surface oriented perpendicular to the tines' outwardly facing surfaces.
7. The instrument according to claim 1 said interior side comprising a notch formed therein for accommodating a vertebral body stop of a disc manipulation instrument.

8. The instrument according to claim 1 said interior side comprising a curved profile.

9. The instrument according to claim 1 said fork-shaped extensions having exterior sides, said exterior sides comprising vertebral endplate contacting surfaces which, in response to pressure applied to said plying device, distract said intervertebral space.

10. The instrument according to claim 1, said interior sides comprising at least one curved facing profile defining an opening dimensioned to permit an intervertebral disc having at least one exterior curved contour to be positioned between the fork-shaped extensions.

11. The instrument according to claim 1 said plying device comprising a plying device having at least two hinges.

12. The instrument according to claim 1 wherein said fork-shaped extensions are releasably detachable from said plying device.

13. A method of distracting an intervertebral space comprising the steps of:  
providing an instrument comprising a plying device comprising opposing fork-shaped extensions extending from distal ends of said plying device, said fork-shaped extensions having interior sides facing each other, the interior sides forming a passage dimensioned to accommodate the passage of an artificial intervertebral disc;

inserting said fork-shaped extensions between the vertebral endplates of an implantation site;

applying pressure to said plying device to distract the intervertebral space;

securing said disc to a manipulation device for manipulating said disc;

inserting the manipulation device in said passage;

advancing said manipulation device into said passage.

14. The method according to claim 13 comprising the further step of inserting said disc into the intervertebral space.

15. The method according to claim 14 comprising the further steps of removing said

instrument and disconnecting said manipulation device from said disc.

16. A system comprising:

an instrument comprising a plying device comprising opposing fork-shaped extensions extending from distal ends of said plying device, said fork-shaped extensions having interior sides facing each other, the interior sides forming a passage dimensioned to accommodate the passage of an artificial intervertebral disc;

at least one artificial intervertebral disc having an upper baseplate and a lower baseplate;

wherein the fork-shaped extensions of said instrument are adapted to engage the upper and lower baseplates of said disc.

17. The system according to claim 16, said baseplates further comprising a centrally disposed dome and teeth disposed apart from said dome, forming a space, and said fork-shaped extensions comprising tines dimensioned to fit into said spaces for grasping said disc.